

Geo-engineering and CBD

Andrew Stott

Head of Biodiversity Evidence

Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs

andrew.stott@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Convention on Biological Diversity

- Multi-lateral environment agreement of 193 Parties
- Agrees decisions by consensus
- Decisions not legally binding, but UK Government is strongly committed to upholding international agreements
- Conference of Parties (COP) meets biannually
- Considered ocean fertilisation at COP9 (2008) and geo-engineering at COP10 (2010)

COP10 Decision X33

Climate Change and Biodiversity



8(w) Requests parties to ensure, in the absence of science based, global, transparent and effective control and regulatory mechanisms for geo-engineering, and in accordance with the precautionary approach and Article 14* of the Convention, that **no climate-related geo-engineering activities* * that may affect biodiversity take place**, until there is an adequate scientific basis on which to justify such activities and appropriate consideration of the associated risks for the environment and biodiversity and associated social, economic and cultural impacts....

*Article 14

Impact assessment and minimizing adverse impacts

Each Party shall:

- introduce procedures for environmental impact assessment for projects likely to have significant adverse effects on biological diversity with a view to avoiding or minimising such effects;
- promote notification and consultation on activities under their jurisdiction or control which are likely to have significant adverse affects on biological diversity of other States or areas beyond national jurisdiction.

****Definition**

Without prejudice to future deliberations on the definition of geo-engineering activities, understanding that **any technologies that deliberately reduce solar insolation or increase carbon sequestration from the atmosphere on a large scale that may affect biodiversity** (excluding carbon capture and storage from fossil fuels when it captures carbon dioxide before it is released into the atmosphere) **should be considered as forms of geo-engineering which are relevant to the CBD** until a more precise definition can be developed.

COP10 Decision X33

Climate Change and Biodiversity cont.

... with the exception of small scale scientific research studies that would be conducted in a controlled setting in accordance with Article 3*** of the Convention, and only if they are justified by the need to gather specific scientific data and are subject to a thorough prior assessment of the potential impacts on the environment;



***Article 3 Principle

States have the responsibility to ensure that activities within their jurisdiction or control do not cause damage to the environment of other States or of areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction.

COP10 Decision X33

Climate Change and Biodiversity cont

9(l) Requests the secretariat to compile and synthesize available scientific information, and views and experiences of indigenous and local communities and other stakeholders, on the possible impacts of geo-engineering techniques on biodiversity and associated social, economic and cultural considerations, and options on definitions and understandings of climate-related geo-engineering relevant to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

UK (Defra) will host an expert meeting on 29 June – 1 July, chaired by Bob Watson, to develop advice on definition and possible impacts.

COP10 Decision X33

Climate Change and Biodiversity cont

9(m) Requests the secretariat, taking into account the possible need for science based global, transparent and effective control and regulatory mechanisms, to undertake a study on gaps in such existing mechanisms for climate-related geo-engineering relevant to the CBD, bearing in mind that such mechanisms may not be best placed under the CBD.

Defra is providing funding to enable secretariat to undertake a review of relevant regulatory mechanisms and gaps.

Summary

- Scientific expertise needed to provide greater clarity and a common view about the scope of activities defined as geo-engineering and understand potential adverse impacts on biodiversity.
- Blanket restrictions on legitimate and safe research studies aimed at assessing the effectiveness and impacts of novel geo-engineering approaches should be avoided.
- Identification of options for developing regulatory mechanisms on geo-engineering, within national and international regimes, offers a route for legitimate and safe science on geo-engineering to be explored.
- SBSTTA16 in May 2012 will develop further recommendations for consideration at COP11 in October 2012

Many thanks

andrew.stott@defra.gsi.gov.uk